

'Blues,' 'Tyrant' share BCC stage

Scott Stets, a music and drama student at BCC, says that the message of his original "blues opera," *The Mephisto Blues*, is not "good vs. bad" but just "different vs. different." It was recently presented by the Music Club at BCC.

The story of this somber piece, visually characterized by strong social and moral symbolism (demonic and religious figures), presents the character of Randy Owens — a young musician in search of fame and fortune in the Mississippi music scene.

The dream is not uncommon. The fact that he is willing to sell his soul to unnatural, underworld promoters to gain fame, is a unique twist. Stets, who also appeared with the "Band from Hell" in the



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Lorraine Lucciola

piece, playing guitar and doing vocals, says he took his inspiration from classical opera. He explained it this way: "There is not constant music in opera. Blues music and classical opera use a technique where a singer sings a melody... followed by instruments which play below the vocal line."

The music was good; you could feel your body sway to the twang and undulating rhythm of country

blues. The piece itself was effective in its surreal, overlapping visions of a kind of blues heaven and hell where the principal character fulfills a dream on borrowed time.

The same afternoon, *Tyrant*, by New York playwright Ursule Molinaro, was produced by the BCC Theatre Rep. Workshop, directed by drama student, Jeff Cunha.

Women do not emerge in an especially admirable light in this play about womanhood, motherhood, marriage, sexuality, creativity, life, death — you name it.

The "tyrant" is three-year-old Luke, a typical baby brat who is catered to and fawned upon by the character of the Adoring Slave, his mother. Her life is totally devoted to this child, played by Matthew Rodrigues. It would have been easy to embellish upon the usual portrayal of a baby by an adult but Cunha steered Rodrigues in a somewhat different direction.

True, Luke appears in a big diaper and knee pads because that's how he shuffles around during the entire play. But the actor's hair is "greyed up" and more importantly, Rodrigues' dialogue with the other actors is adult. Other characters speak to him as most adults do to children. Although he answers in chopped up sentences, Luke responds with the obstinate, contrary qualities of a stubborn grown up.

Molinaro's characters have no proper names. They are identified by adjectives — what they are, not who they are. Colleen Livesey returned to the BCC drama scene as the Summer Renter. Her performance was natural and mature. She has a special quality on stage. Christine St. Laurent was the Adoring Slave who put up with Rodrigues' antics and whining and who conveyed an intended weary, this-is-my-lot-in-life attitude. The Painter was played by Henry Williams; Mrs. God by Lily Silva and the Owl by Tracy Kettle. This actress has a beautiful speaking voice and developed an easy rapport with the audience. She seemed very comfortable with her role.

Lorraine Lucciola is a freelance writer.